

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAPE T 00575 311044Z

53

ACTION AF-18

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FM AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3602

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SF

SUBJ: PROSPECTS FOR COORDINATION AMONG SOUTH AFRICA'S

LIBERALLY ORIENTED GROUPS

REF: CAPE TOWN 547

1. AT AUGUST 30 MEETING WITH PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PP) LEADER COLIN EGLIN, CONGEN ASKED ABOUT LATEST DEVELOPMENTS INVOLVING VARIOUS LIBERALLY ORIENTED SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND GROUPINGS.

2. EGLIN HAS HAD TWO MEETINGS WITH FORMER MINISTER THEO GERDENER, HEAD OF ACTION SOUTH AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (ASASA), AND HAS ALSO SEEN VERLIGTE ACTION ORGANIZERS AND JAPIE BASSON OF UNITED PARTY AS REPRESENTATIVE OF PARTY'S YOUNG TURKS. (EARLIER JAN VAN ECK, EDITOR OF PROG'S AFRIKAANS JOURNAL DEURBRAAK, HAD STATED IN LATEST ISSUE THAT "NOTHING CAN BE MORE FATAL FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S FUTURE THAN THAT THESE VERLIGTE GROUPS SHOULD REMAIN DIVIDED". HE SUGGESTED ALL SHOULD BE UNITED WITHIN ONE PURTY.) GERDENER SAID HE WANTED "TALK TURKEY" WITH EGLIN. WHILE THEY APPARENTLY ONLY FENCED ABOUT DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH (E.G. GERDENER WANTS EVENTUAL COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT SOUTHERN AFRICAN STATES WHILE PP FAVORS FEDERAL APPROACH), THEY PLAN CONTINUE CONVERSATIONS. MEANWHILE GERDENER HAS POSTPONED ANNOUNCING NEW POLITICAL

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PAGE 02 CAPE T 00575 311044Z

PARTY.

3. EGLIN, WHO LEAVING FOR PP NATIONAL CONGRESS IN DURBAN STARTING SEPTEMBER 3, HAS HIGH HOPES AN AGREED DECLARATION ON FEDERATION CAN BE REACHED AT THE MULTI-RACIAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FEDERATION BEING CALLED BY HIS PARTY AT EAST LONDON IN NOVEMBER UNDER CHAIRMANSHIP OF DONALD WOODS, EDITOR OF CITY'S DAILY DISPATCH. WITH OR WITHOUT THIS AS RALLYING POINT HE HOPES ENOUGH BACKING CAN BE OBTAINED FROM ASASA AND VERLIGTE ACTION MEMBERS TO GET THREE OR FOUR PROGS INTO PARLIAMENT AND MAKE IT ATTRACTIVE FORCE. PP ALSO PREPARED AGREE WITH GERDENER TO SUPPORT EACH OTHERS CANDIDATES IN SELECTED CONSTITUENCIES IF LATTER DECIDES FORM POLITICAL PARTY. (NOTE: ACCORDING TO EGLIN GERDENER CLAIMS CONSIDERABLE PRESS SUPPORT INCLUDING ARGUS GROUP AND ESPECIALLY STRONG BACKING IN NATAL WHERE HE WAS PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATOR. WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF MEANINGFUL ARGUS SUPPORT IN CAPE AREA.)

4. EGLIN SEES NO RPT NO POSSIBILITY OF ANY ELECTORAL ALLIANCE OR OTHER COOPERATION WITH UP AS LONG AS GRAAF REMAINS ITS LEADER. HE PROFESSES BE UNWORRIED THAT NEW LOOK GIVEN UP AT ITS TRANSVAAL CONGRESS WILL DRAW SUPPORT AWAY FROM PROGS.

5. COMMENT: THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCES AND CONFUSION AMONG LIBERAL LEANING GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS AND UNCERTAINTY AS TO HOW THEY SHOULD INTERACT. HOWEVER UP YOUNG TURKS ARE REPORTEDLY FIRM IN INTENTION TO WORK WITHIN PARTY AND NOT REPEAT PROG "MISTAKE" OF HIVING OFF. NONETHELESS ALL ELEMENTS SEEM AWARE OF FRAGMENTATION DANGERS. WHETHER SOME FORM OF UNITY OR COORDINATED ACTION WILL UNTIMATELY RESULT IS STILL FAR FROM CLEAR. BASED ON PAST HISTORY THERE ARE GOOD GROUNDS FOR SKEPTICISM. ONEILL

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